

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested. Claims 5-8 and 18-35 are pending, Claims 5-8 having been amended, Claims 18-35 having been added, and Claims 1-4 and 9-17 having been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer by way of the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action Claims 1-17 were rejected as being unpatentable over Ahuja et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,689,553, hereinafter Ahuja) in view of Bruno et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,020,915, hereinafter Bruno).

The undersigned appreciatively acknowledges the interview between the Examiner and the undersigned on February 20, 2004. During the interview, agreement was reached that by clarifying what is meant by the term "virtual terminal" the pending claims define over the asserted prior art.

In reply, independent Claims 1 (a method claim), 4 (an apparatus claim), and 9 (a system claim) have been cancelled and replaced by new Claims 34, 18 and 35 respectively. These independent claims were drafted to clarify the claimed structure and functions as they relate to a virtual terminal, as discussed during the interview. It is believed that new independent Claims 34, 18, and 35 are clearly written and consistent with the discussion held during the interview. However, if the Examiner disagrees, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned so that mutually agreeable claim language may be identified. Also, it is believed that the present claims do not raise a new issue that would require further search or consideration. On the contrary, it is believed that the amendment claims simply the Examiner's review of the claims and makes the claims easier to read. Accordingly, the undersigned respectfully requests that the Examiner enter the present amendment even though the amendment is after the claims have been finally rejected.

For convenience in the present application, all of the dependent claims have been written to depend from Claim 18, although Applicants reserve the right to file one or more continuation applications to seek additional protection on claims of differing scope and statutory class.

Claim 34 is directed to a virtual terminal configuring method. (Independent Claims 18 and 35 are of a different statutory class, but contain related provisions as will be discussed). The method of Claim 34 includes a step of managing terminal management information associated with a plurality of communication devices, where the information includes communication attributes of the plurality of devices. The method includes a step of inputting a calling signal from a calling terminal to an apparatus for configuring a virtual terminal. The calling signal contains a first content part and a second content part. The method of Claim 34 also includes a step of identifying which the plurality of communication devices are capable of processing information corresponding to at least one of the first content part and the second content part. The method separates the calling signal into the first content part and the second content part, and sends the information corresponding to the first content part to a first terminal identified in the identifying step as being capable of processing the information of the first content part, and sends information corresponding to the second content part to a second terminal identified in the identifying step as being capable of processing information of the second content part.

An advantage of the present invention is that a calling terminal is able to place a call without needing any knowledge about the communication resources available to a user. Moreover, by having an apparatus for configuring a virtual terminal it is possible to receive the calling signal, separate it into different content parts, and after identifying the different terminals that are able to handle the different content parts, the apparatus sends the respective content parts off to those respective terminals. As an example, if the calling signal includes

an audio component and a video component, the apparatus (and method) would separate the audio signal from the video signal, identify a device that can handle the audio signal, and a device that can handle the video signal. Subsequently, the device would send the audio signal (perhaps changing the signaling scheme if necessary) to the device that can handle the audio signal, and the video signal (or variant thereof) to the device that can handle the video signal. The calling terminal has no indication and requires no *a priori* knowledge regarding the communication abilities of the device used by the end user. In this way, the end user is able to take advantage of the different communication resources available to the user (perhaps a PDA, or a television) and combine the respective attributes of these devices to be able to handle calling signals that contain multimedia content.

As discussed during the interview, Ahuja sets up a virtual meeting by having parties contact a central facility. Different parties are queried to determine what systems they wish to use to communicate, and the central facility uses audio and video bridges to facilitate the communications.

In contrast to the method defined by Claim 34, Ahuja does not teach the identification of communication devices that are able to handle the different content parts of the calling signal. Ahuja simply enables the communication between conferees regardless of the different levels of multimedia communication capabilities of the communication terminals of the different conferees. For this reason, each conferee communicates with another conferee via the virtual meeting services complex, and thus the communication is basically a 1:1 communication.

As discussed during the interview, Ahuja does not teach or suggest (1) identifying the communication attributes and communications devices capable of handling information corresponding to at least one of a first content part and a second content part, nor (2) separating the calling signal into the first content part and second content part, nor (3)

sending the information corresponding to the first content part to the first device (identified as being capable of handling it), and the information corresponding to the second content part to the second device.

The outstanding Office Action attempts to cure these deficiencies by asserting Bruno as a method for extending the capabilities of a user having a limited video capability and point of interacting with a user at a multimedia end point by identifying those terminals having limited video capabilities.

However, as discussed during the interview, Bruno merely proposes a method that allows the communication mode for communication between two user devices to be selected based on the abilities of the user devices and or the preferences of the user. Bruno is basically like Ahuja in that it provides a 1:1 communication. Bruno does not teach or suggest the features discussed above (steps of identifying, separating and sending) that are also absent in Ahuja. Consequently, it is respectfully submitted that no matter how Ahuja is combined with Bruno, the combination does not teach or suggest all of the steps of Claim 34, and therefore does not render obvious the invention of Claim 34.

New Claim 18 is directed to an apparatus for configuring a virtual terminal that includes a plurality of communication devices accessible to the apparatus. It is respectfully submitted that independent Claim 18, as well as Claims 5-8, and 19-31, which depend from Claim 18 also patentably define over the asserted prior art for substantially the same reasons discussed above with regard to Claim 34. Likewise, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claim 35 patentably define over the asserted prior art.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the foregoing comments, it is respectfully submitted that the invention defined by Claims 5-8 and 18-35, as amended, patentably define over the asserted prior art. The present application is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore requested.

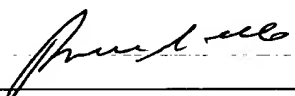
Respectfully submitted,

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